

to condition aid based on progress in democratization and respect for human rights, however when the State Department decided to cut aid to Uzbekistan (or failure to meet these conditions (equal to \$18 million), the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff announced that Uzbekistan would receive an increase of \$21 million in military aid. Furthermore, the aid condition in Kazakhstan is allowed a presidential waiver.

This "soft-line" approach is probably in large part to the strategic location of these states. The Central Asian states offered overflight and other support when the U.S. went into Afghanistan. Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan have hosted coalition troops and provided access to airbases. In 2003, Uzbekistan endorsed coalition military action in Iraq and Kazakhstan provided about two-dozen troops for rebuilding.

Our policy is convenient, not consistent. We talk about building democracy in the Middle East out of one side of our mouth, while we keep authoritarian regimes in power on the other side.

The world is watching closely what the U.S. does in Iraq, and we are hopeful that a legitimate democracy will flourish there and throughout the region. I am hopeful other Arab nations will eventually hold elections. But it must be on their timetable, not ours.

Our presence in Iraq is only slowing any hope for genuine democratization. Violence against Iraqis is only increasing as time goes by. The country is becoming even more destabilized. But this Administration has not yet presented an exit strategy or any kind of timetable of bringing our troops home. Instead, we are pouring billions of dollars into the probable construction of long-term military facilities in Iraq so that we can have a permanent presence there, as well as in the surrounding countries, none of which could be called democratic.

So, Mr. Chairman, I hope that this hearing will go beyond self-congratulation and beyond merely illuminating the desire for democracy by people in the Middle East. Rather I hope that this hearing will illuminate how our missteps are hindering democracy, so that we can correct a failed policy.

TRIBUTE TO LIEUTENANT COLONEL MICHAEL VAN RASSEN

HON. ROBERT E. (BUD) CRAMER, JR.

OF ALABAMA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 19, 2005

Mr. CRAMER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Lieutenant Colonel Michael Van Rassen upon his retirement from the U.S. Army after more than 20 years of outstanding service to our country. After his retirement on August 31, 2005, Lieutenant Colonel Van Rassen will reside in my Congressional district.

Lieutenant Colonel Van Rassen has been assigned to several key military positions throughout his career, which culminated as the Product Manager for Fielding and Integration for Air and Missile Defense Command and Control Systems (AMDCCS) Product Office in Madison, Alabama, a position he has held since 2002. It is in this role that Lieutenant Colonel Van Rassen will leave an enduring mark on the future of the Army.

He was instrumental in the deployment of the Forward Area Air Defense Command, cross leveraging software capabilities through the Air and Missile Defense Planning and Control System program, designing and vali-

dating the critical need for the Air Defense Aerospace Management Cell, leading the DOD Counter-Rocket, Artillery and Mortar initiative for deployments to Afghanistan and Iraq.

Lieutenant Colonel Van Rassen has distinguished himself throughout his military service in challenging and diverse assignments. Throughout his career, he has received many medals and awards for his ability to lead by example, encourage excellence from his peers and subordinates, effectively manage the Army's resources, and consistently produce outstanding results. I commend Lieutenant Colonel Van Rassen for his ability to energize a diverse staff toward a common purpose, setting high standards and inspiring his staff to achieve them.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the people of North Alabama, I congratulate Lieutenant Colonel Van Rassen for his 20 years of service to our country.

INTRODUCTION OF RESOLUTION CONDEMNING RELIGIOUS INTOL- ERANCE AND URGING RESPECT FOR ALL HOLY BOOKS

HON. JOHN CONYERS, JR.

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 19, 2005

Mr. CONYERS. Mr. Speaker, so much of American history is defined by our national commitment to tolerate each others' religious differences. This was the wisdom behind the words of President John Kennedy, who reminded us that "tolerance implies no lack of commitment to one's own beliefs. Rather it condemns the oppression or persecution of others."

I introduce this Resolution today as a reminder that we must still strive to condemn bigotry and religious intolerance, and recognize that holy books of every religion should be treated with dignity and respect. Our dedication to this struggle has never been more important than it is today, with recent events both at home and abroad. We can begin to fulfill this obligation with a renewed effort to continued education and the dispelling of stereotypes.

For example, much of the public is not aware that the word Islam comes from the Arabic root word meaning "peace" and "submission." Terrorism cannot be justified under any valid interpretation of the Islamic faith. There are an estimated 7 million Muslims in America, from a wide variety of ethnic backgrounds. The holy book of Islam, the Quran, is recited by Muslims during prayer. From the Quran, Muslims learn valuable lessons about peace, humanity and spirituality.

This Resolution recognizes that believers of all religions, including the faiths of Christianity, Judaism and Islam, should be treated with respect and dignity. The mistreatment of prisoners and disrespect toward the holy book of any religion is unacceptable and against civilized humanity. I am concerned as anyone that our nation would disparage the Quran or the Muslim religion. This Resolution therefore makes it clear that it is not the official policy of the U.S. government to disparage the Quran, Islam or any other faith. I hope this Resolution will help us recognize that we need

to embrace the Muslim people and tolerance if we are truly interested in supporting democracy around the world.

SUPPORT FOR H.R. 2057

HON. CORRINE BROWN

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 19, 2005

Ms. CORRINE BROWN of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to express my support for H.R. 2057, which disapproves of DC. Act 16-47 (the Terrorism Prevention in Hazardous Materials Transportation Temporary Act of 2005), which calls for the rerouting of hazardous materials around Washington, DC.

While re-routing hazardous materials from the Capitol area of Washington, DC sounds well-intentioned, it only shifts the risk of that transportation to other neighborhoods and other modes of transportation. The additional switching of these cars will add to the congestion in the yards, and back up traffic on CSXT main lines, potentially affecting their entire network, including Amtrak, VRE, and MARC. It also means that chemical containers could be sitting for hours, if not days, in rail yards waiting to be moved.

Longer transit times and distances, increased car handlings and dwell times are factors that tend to increase the inherent risk of transporting hazardous materials. This would also add significant cost to the shippers, and potentially disrupt the flow of commerce for those customers like water treatment plants, pharmaceutical companies, gas stations, etc.

The Federal Government has always had the ultimate authority over interstate commerce. The transportation of hazardous materials is governed by Federal regulations as proscribed under the Hazardous Materials Transportation Act, which gives the authority to DOT. And it is important to note that the railroads are governed by the common carrier duty, which means we must carry what is legally tendered to them by law.

Finally, the Department of Justice, the National Industrial Transportation League, the American Trucking Associations, the United Transportation Union, Norfolk Southern and others have either weighed in with an amicus brief in Federal Court, a letter to the STB, or a letter to the House Government Reform and Senate Homeland Security Committees.

I call upon government at all levels to develop meaningful standards that improve safety and security for all modes. Rerouting freight from one backyard to another does not constitute meaningful standards to improve safety and security for any mode, and I encourage this Congress to promptly disapprove DC's ordinance.

THE FIRST NATIONAL ASIAN AND PACIFIC ISLANDER HIV/AIDS AWARENESS DAY

HON. MICHAEL M. HONDA

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 19, 2005

Mr. HONDA. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of the first National Asian and Pacific Islander HIV/AIDS Awareness Day. This commemorative day aims to raise the awareness